

K-12 Advisory Committee

July 18, 2006

Staff Summary

K-12 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS AND STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT

The meeting began with a general overview of where we are in the recommendation develop phase of the work and a review of the comments from the Steering Committee on the recommendation materials they received July 10. The committee members have a document listing the comments.

Chair Bergeson and committee members made the following observations:

Work on connecting program change via investments to the changes the “real world” will see – what will be different in elementary school, middle school and high school, as examples.

- An appreciation for highlighting time, leadership and technology.
- Discussion of accountability and how it should be viewed. There is concern in the committee that waste, fraud and abuse is the target. Committee members believe that the productivity equation of us in the achievement of children. This is where efficiency come in as well. Further, there is a sense that since there has been so little money added to the system in recent years, there are few dollars available for waste.
- An appreciation for highlighting relationships in the system goals. The comment was made that if relationships are addressed in the system goals we would have an avenue for building the public understanding we want.

SUCCESSFUL DISTRICT STUDY PRESENTATION

Michelle Turner Mangan presented the completed consultant report on successful school district study. The focus of the presentation was on the findings of the field work conducted. Committee members have a copy of the full draft report as well as a copy of the powerpoint presentation outlining the findings.

In summary, the report suggests that where the biggest gains have been made, the following factors are in play:

- There is a commitment and focus on educating all students (from struggling to gifted)
- Data on student performance is used to drive decisions (continuous work)
Rigorous curriculum that is aligned to the state standards is used
Professional development and teacher coaches are focused on content and effective delivery strategies (including collaborative planning and debriefing time)
- Changes were made in the organization of the student’s day as appropriate

(multiage classrooms, ability grouping, reduced class size, more instructional time in the basics)

- Struggling students have additional learning opportunities (tutors, before and after school, etc.)
- Strong leadership with focus on instruction and building buy-in for change

The schools in this small sample were able to make above average gains in one content area and usually at one grade span (example: reading at the elementary level). The report argues that these districts have used the resources available to them, so to work on additional subject areas and focus on additional grade spans will take additional resources.

Committee member questions / comments:

- Did graduation rates increase in the schools studied? Answer - this was not examined.
- It seems that most difficulties are at the high school level. What are the implications for high schools? Answer - The strategies successfully used at elementary and middle school should be available and employed at high schools as well; they now rarely get to high schools.
- Building a team in a school, especially high school, is difficult work. This is why the instructional coaching strategy is so powerful. The coach must be strong in the content area and in pedagogy.
- We expect elementary teachers to be expert at everything. Perhaps we should have math and science specialists just as we currently have music and p.e. specialists.
- The important thing to realize is we are asking for a culture change. And, efficiencies are found not in working harder, but creating these changes. Need to spend more time looking at leadership. This, along with good data is important. Perhaps this type of information should be put in a separate publication for district use.
- Be cognizant of the use of the terms "standards" and "standardized." We need standards, but shouldn't be standardized in how we help students reach standards.

FINANCE STRUCTURES REPORT

Jeff Vincent lead a discussion about considerations of this group. He acknowledged that the full advisory committee accepted most of the elements presented in the consultant's model, however there is a need to be realistic and think about priorities and phasing in resources. The members discussed full day kindergarten, instructional coaches, professional development, curriculum transformation and tutors with the acknowledgement that other areas such as compensation, special education, ELL and others still need attention.

Committee member comments:

- Several concerns about class size were raised. First, a concern that it was not on the list presented. Second, focus on the early years with a possible phasing strategy of beginning one biennium with kindergarten, the next with first grade, followed the next with second grade - the rationale being that the students maintain the support they need from grade to grade. Third, perhaps there is a need for class size reduction in certain secondary areas, such as for teachers who teach writing.
- Discussion that all-day kindergarten support should be connected to other factors such as program quality criteria, serving struggling populations, having or developing early learning partnerships, etc.
- Discussion regarding the type of staff performing the tutor role. Highly trained classified staff can be very successful; doesn't have to be a certificated staff person. This is also a way to reach out to community members and give them a role in our schools.
- Some see a link between instructional facilitators and tutors. If have one service, perhaps don't need as much of the other.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Comments presented included:

Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training Board - Think about high schools differently, include motivation strategies, consider career and tech programs.

Elissa Disson, WSSDA member on non-high task force - Wants to be sure small school district issues are addressed and enumerated several funding concerns: impact of special ed population as a percentage of total student population, reliance on school levies, adequate funding for administrative staff.

Bob Cooper, representing WACTE - The committee should remember that colleges are producing beginning teachers; mentors and coaches would go a long way to helping teachers develop their skills. And, if want to attract more diverse group to the profession, look at tuition costs and teacher compensation - make these affordable.

Marcia Holland, Washington Coalition of Gifted Education - Concern that students who are three to five standard deviations above most classmate are not being provided appropriate programs. Believe that gifted students must be specifically mentioned in the recommendations because without that they will be overlooked.

Kathryn Ahl, North Kitsap School District board president - Discussed local budget reductions and doesn't see anything in the recommendations that address the needs of districts. Supports class size reduction and believes this is the one program parents and teachers support. Concern with Governor's statement that 728 is fully funded. If there is waste in their district they would have addressed it; don't believe they have any; don't believe there are dollars to reprogram; no where left to cut; they are being accountable and transparent to the public. People don't want more bureaucracies,

fund what districts are doing and do it quickly and tell the legislature it will cost \$1.2 billion.

Sen. Rosemary McAuliffe, Chair

The quality of the teacher in the classroom is key, so she believes the committee should prioritize these: Compensation – to recruit and retain quality teachers; Give teachers a doable task, so provide class sizes that respond to student needs; Professional development – new teachers need mentors; Technology – we should supply support for this; the NERC (non-employee related cost) portion of the current funding formula has never recognized technology costs and these weren't around when the formula was originally constructed; Make clear what is basic education and what is not; Provide for stable, predictable and fair funding – example, for districts with declining enrollment, phase-down rather than taking the student reduction all at once as a formula driver; To achieve world-class standards provide districts with use of resource flexibility, require more specifics if a school is not doing well; Efficiencies can be found if we look at how we look at the costs of safety, the special education safety net and audits.

Lisa Jarrett, Washington State Arts Commission – Arts and creativity provide many benefits: sports learning in other curricular areas, teacher 21st century skills, improves school culture through engagement and collaboration, provides an avenue for accountability.

Bunker Frank, National Association of Year Round Education – Presented suggested language related to reengineering schools recommendation regard realignment of school time. Material presented to committee members.

Cecile Lindquist, Special Education Coalition – Supports the current special education formula structure and believes that the support basic education, being raised for all children, will also help special education children. They don't wish to see special education singled out for additional funds. They are not proponents of the current special education lawsuit.

Mother from Bethel – Concerned that her son made great gains in preschool and then when arriving at kindergarten didn't learn anything new beyond that already covered in preschool. And, she is disappointed that these kinds of issues were not the topic of the parent-teacher conference. The teacher and parent need to be on the same page.

Committee discussion

- Richard discussed how relationships can be built in schools. Realizes that teachers are not taught how to work with parents. Navigation 101 takes a step in connecting staff to kids, but this has to be done with the outlook that the teacher views their set of students as if they were their very own children: keep track of attendance, grades, counselor referrals, etc. Have the attitude that we can save the world one kid at a time. Use homeroom or similar time, with the Navigation-like curriculum; four days a week, 30 minutes a day. Comment – this is a low-cost, possible item that is sensible and can be included in our work.

- Need to be sure we are balancing the effort to take care of our students and the effort to provide more opportunities to help teachers.
- Concern that other items previously discussed by the committee have dropped off. Thought the committee's job was to identify what was needed and then leave that for the legislature to determine how to provide the funds for it. Response that those items not in the priority list will be recorded and available for consideration by others as part of the overall Wa Learns work.
- A request that other items be discussed at the next meeting in relationship to funding priorities.
- A suggestion to continue focusing on those things that change student performance such as asking: are you better off with 1 coach working with 15 teachers to change practice or getting sixteen teachers in a school.
- A suggestion to develop a long-term phase-in plan that ultimately would show what our long-term view is for K-12.
- Other suggestions included putting package elements in priority order, don't forget the state/local share/responsibility issue; cluster costing around the recommendations.